



**Seattle Olmsted Legacy Task Force**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**March 28, 2018**

**Olmsted Legacy Task Force Members**

Present:

Tom Byers, Co-chair  
Doug Luetjen, Co-chair  
Andy Mitton  
Jenifer Rees  
Jennifer Ott  
Ed D'Alessandro  
Eugenia Woo  
Zoe Kasperzyk  
Nyah Curcuruto  
Susan McLaughlin  
Mark Jaeger

Excused:

Don Harris  
Jeremy Wood  
Park District Oversight Committee Representative (TBD)

**Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff**

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent  
Danyal Lotfi, Community Engagement Advisor

The meeting was held at 100 Dexter Avenue North. The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM. The Task Force members started by introducing themselves.

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) Acting Superintendent Christopher Williams then explained the history of how the Olmsted Legacy Task Force came about and why it's important to Seattle, SPR and the future of our Olmsted parks and boulevards. Even though SPR and the Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks (FSOP) have been working together for years, the need for creation of a better partnership and establishing a plan for the protection, preservation, curation and expansion of the Olmsted legacy in Seattle propelled the department to create this Task Force. Deepening the relationship between SPR and FSOP for the benefit of the parks in our community is important outcome of the Task Force's work. Superintendent Williams further explained that SPR asks that the Task Force **not** focus on:

- Creation of a historical district for our Olmsted Parks, for which SPR does not currently have capacity

- Recommendations regarding park use, for which the Board of Park Commissioners is responsible
- Large multi-million-dollar capital projects, as SPR has a limited budget

The Superintendent would like the Task Force to focus on the following:

- Recommendations to the Superintendent and the Board of Park Commissioners on specific standards of design related to maintaining the character and effect of the Olmsted Parks, including design elements such as park furniture, lighting, signage, and landscaping
- Recommendations for best practices for maintaining our Olmsted parks and boulevards
- Recommending educational programs for informing the public about the Olmsted legacy in Seattle
- Recommendations for innovative approaches on how to manage our Olmsted parks and boulevards
- Recommendations on how to best export Olmsted design elements to other parks in Seattle and how improve existing and create new **green connections** between our parks
- Recommendations for prioritizing funding for recommendations above to be considered in the next iteration of the Park District funding package
- Recommendations for creating a sustainable connection between SPR and the community and to improve on the existing connection between SPR and FSOP

This work can be achieved by:

- Respectful two-way communication between Task Force members
- Generating policy-level questions so that Task Force members can address the challenges we face
- Incorporating public comment into the work of the Task Force
- Making practical recommendations for the Park District funding package, based on SPR's appropriations limits

Co-chairs Doug Luetjen and Tom Byers also gave remarks during the introduction period. They welcomed the Task Force members and thanked them for volunteering their time to be a part of this work. Co-chair Luetjen hopes that the Task Force members will gain a better understanding of what "it" is that we are hoping to preserve and why it's important, in other words, what are the elements of an Olmsted designed park and park system that make them work. Through discussion and presentations, co-chair Luetjen hopes to achieve this task. He emphasized one of the key reasons why the Olmsted brothers designed the Seattle parks system, which was to provide relief for those living in increasingly urban and dense neighborhoods, a condition still relevant today.

Co-chair Byers shared what he considers the three important elements of the Olmsted legacy:

- The physical parks and boulevards that were built from their plans
- A set of design principles that stressed green connections between parks
- Olmsted brothers were not only landscape architects but also social architects, considering the abolitionist and journalism background of Fredrick Law Olmsted Sr. during the Civil War; as a consequence of this background, the Olmsteds understood that access to parks and

green spaces by all residents of an urban city was an important goal that the park system was designed to address

Task Force members Jenifer Rees (FSOP President) and Andy Mitton (FSOP Past President) gave a presentation on the history of the Olmsted legacy in Seattle and other parts of the country. You can read more about this history on the FSOP website at [seattleolmsted.org](http://seattleolmsted.org).

Task Force member D'Alessandro asked for further clarity on the work of the Task Force and why we've come together. Acting Superintendent Williams pointed to a current challenge SPR is dealing with, which is that our parks are being used by more and more people every day as more people move into the city to live and work. He added that deferred maintenance caused by budget restrictions have also been a challenge. In responding to this pressure, we must ensure that we respond while staying conscious of the historical value of our parks and how we can preserve their character moving forward. SPR would like to be more intentional in this work and find opportunities for investment in the Olmsted parks and legacy. Co-chair Luetjen pointed to certain additions to regulations, such as the important and critical ADA accessibility and environmentally critical areas ordinances, and how there currently is no legal obligation to consider the historical character of the Olmsted parks and boulevards. Co-chair Luetjen hopes that this Task Force will find opportunities and methods through which we can recommend ways in which the City preserve the historical character of our Olmsted parks and boulevards. Task Force member Mitton pointed to the differences and challenges in preservation of parks, which are living green spaces that grow over time, and preservation of historical buildings, which are not. He'd like the Task Force to determine how we can best use City programs and funding to create a plan for the future of these green spaces.

The Task Force members briefly discussed the opportunity in working with other City Departments who have a stake in our parks and parks system. Through the representatives from Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) and Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) these representatives will share their knowledge and expertise as we discuss the future of Olmsted parks and boulevards in Seattle.

With regards to educating the public, Task Force member Jennifer Ott pointed to some of the resistance by certain neighborhoods to, for example, reviving the vegetation of a park or rehabilitation projects at certain parks. She believes that by further educating the public on what it is that we're protecting and why we're protecting it, SPR has an opportunity to increase the level of care by our residents for our Olmsted parks and boulevards.

Task Force facilitator Danyal Lotfi shared the proposed timeline of the Task Force with members. He asked their thoughts on designing and scheduling the last two meetings, each of them to be held before the presentation to the Board of Park Commissioners on the progress of the Task Force. These meetings will be working meetings, longer than our usual meeting times (and potentially on a weekend) as opposed to our regular weekday evening meetings. Task Force members expressed interest in this proposal and the Task Force will plan to move forward with the idea of having the last two meetings held and conducted in this manner, keeping in mind that the timeline is a bit fluid and can be adjusted in the future. The Task Force is charged with presenting

to the Board of Park Commissioners at three different points and members decided to assign the reporting task to a Task Force member as we get closer to the date.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30PM.